



Is Africa Ready for the SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) Target by 2030?

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Abstract

In recent time, the prevalence of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity have increased in most African countries as the continent continued to experience rising number of people that are undernourished. This paper reveals the progress of African region in pursuit of SDG 2 target by 2030 considering both the global and Africa SDG threshold (rating) in 2019. The SDG2 target achievement in Africa is facing serious obstacles such as high level of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, corruption, banditry, kidnapping, conflicts, and terrorism. With enormous challenges confronting Africa, can SDG 2 target be achieved in the continent by 2030?



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It is becoming increasingly difficult for people around the world (especially in Africa) to have access to food that can meet their essential nutrient intake requirements on a daily basis. Recent estimates in 2019 revealed that about 690 million in the world experienced food deprivation (hunger) while close to 2 billion people were denied opportunity to safe, nourishing and adequate food. Asia accounted for over 1 billion; about 675 million reside in Africa while a little above 200 million stay in Latin America.¹⁻³

Sustainable Development Goals 2 (SDG2), also referred to as "Zero Hunger" is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It centres on bringing an end to hunger, food insecurity and


attaining better nutrition, and encourage agricultural sustainability by 2030.⁴ The five principal targets of SDG2 as outlined by the United Nations (UN) are, by 2030, to: (i) end hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food (ii) end all forms of malnutrition (iii) double the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (iv) ensure sustainable food production systems and implementing resilient agricultural practices (v) maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, plants, and animals.

The three main SDG2 implementing mechanisms are to: (i) increase investment through enhanced international cooperation (ii) correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural

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markets and (iii) ensure proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information.^{2,5}

With less than a decade to the deadline of the United Nations SDG 2 target, is Africa really ready for the achievement of the SDG 2 by 2030?

The recent SDG 2 scorecard in Africa showed that hunger has remained a scourge in Africa. The number of underfed people in the region rose from 193 million to 250 million in a 14-year period (2005-2019). This has equally been projected to reach 433 million in the next decade.¹⁻³ East and West Africa experienced unprecedented rise, from 95 and 37 million respectively to 118 and 59 million respectively in the same period.¹⁻² While incidence of stunting among under-five children decreased globally from about 200 million in 2000 to 144 million in 2019, Sub-Saharan Africa remained the only region with an increasing figure of stunting in children, where two out of every five of stunted children reside. Also, 27 percent of under-five children in Africa in 2019 experienced wasting.^{1-3, 6, 15}

However, hunger witnessed some level of reduction especially in North Africa (excluding Libya) where hunger severity as measured by Global Hunger Index (GHI) scores were low (<9.9). Furthermore, 79 percent of countries in Africa captured in 2019 GHI report had their GHI scores ranged from 20.0-34.9 (serious) to ≥ 50 (extremely alarming) in 2019.^{2, 7-8}

Compelling evidence from the work of Otegunrin *et al.* (2020a)² showed that Africa is not ready for SDG2 target by 2030. In the research, three out of six SDG2 indicators (prevalence of undernourished population (%), prevalence of wasting in under-five children (%) and prevalence of stunting in under-five children (%)) were used to assess SDG2 African countries' progress using both global and Africa SDG thresholds (rating) in 2019.² The report showed that no country in Africa attained SDG2 target (green rating) for all the 3 SDG2 indicators.²

Moreover, only six nations (Algeria, Ghana, Mauritius, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia) attained the green threshold for two of the SDG2 indicators while 14 countries had SDG2 achievement threshold for just one SDG2 indicator.² Also, the report indicated that most countries in Africa are in the danger zone (red threshold), revealing significant obstacles in the pursuit of SDG2 achievement in less than a decade (2030).²

Furthermore, many African nations are confronted with enormous challenges aggravating the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity on the continent. These include high level of poverty, severe pre- and post-harvest losses due to ravaging pests and diseases, unemployment, social exclusion, corruption, banditry, kidnapping, conflicts, and terrorism.^{2, 10-11, 14} Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic was added to this list. Many African countries experienced spike in COVID-19 cases (especially during the second wave) with grave implications for food production and supply. Funds supposedly earmarked for agricultural sector are transferred to finance the fight against COVID-19. Thus, the hunger situation in Africa became exacerbated in many parts of the continent.^{7, 12-13} With the present situation of hunger and food insecurity in Africa, it is evident that most countries are off track in the pursuit of SDG2 achievement by 2030. Thus, there is need for the heads of governments in Africa to have enough political will to move the continent towards SDG2 target by 2030.

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Conflict of Interest

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